

PURISSIMA PIPELINE

LEAD AND COPPER CLARIFICATION Last month, a leaflet was included with your water bill that was required information from the Department of Health Services because the District had failed triennial lead and copper testing. This testing indicates if the water supply is leaching lead and copper from brass fixtures in customers' homes when the water is allowed to sit for 6-12 hours.

Continuous testing of the Hetch Hetchy water supply, which comes from snow pack runoff in the Sierras with virtually no human contact, shows there is no lead concern. However, bathroom and kitchen fixtures do have a small percentage of lead due to the use of brass. Testing for lead and copper in a bathroom that has not been used in several days will almost certainly fail. Performing the same test on a faucet that was flushed will pass.

The test conditions require the sample to be collected from the first draw of water after 6-12 hours of non-use to simulate typical usage. This is not a controlled laboratory test. The District must rely on the homeowners to take the tests and follow instructions explicitly. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know if these instructions are always followed and, unless this happens, the test is likely to fail. The District is allowed two failures to pass the lead and copper testing, the third failed by an extremely small number—only 4 parts per billion.

Regardless of the test results, customers should always allow the water to run from their faucets long enough to get cool water in order to ensure that any contaminants are out of the system before drinking.

TINY LITTLE BUBBLES Many customers in the Bay Area have noticed that the water has a cloudy or milky-white appearance. This is due to air in the lines and does not affect the quality of the drinking water. If the water is allowed to stand for a few minutes, the cloudiness will dissipate as the air bubbles rise to the surface.

The reason for the air is due to maintenance work on the Hetch Hetchy pipeline which was shut down last month. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's (SFPUC) local supply, the Sunol Valley Water Treatment Plant, increased the rate of treatment to make up for the water shortfall. This caused air to be mixed into the water, which in turn made the water look cloudy or milky.

The SFPUC's water continues to meet all state and federal regulatory requirements for water quality. The cloudiness will dissipate when Hetch Hetchy supplies reach the Bay Area after the maintenance work is completed, scheduled for the end of February.

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